

Our Forefathers, We Owe Them

Editor's note: In our day of compromise, we see many Baptists, so-called Baptists, saying the name Baptist is not important. If it's not, why is our history full of Baptists? If it's not important, why did God call John, The Baptist? Take away the name Baptist, take away history. Multitudes died because they were Baptist, not some no name church. The name Baptist tells the world who we are and what we believe.

The Baptists of Holland are acknowledged by historians to have had their origin at a very remote period. Mosheim says: "The true origin of that sect which acquired the name of Anabaptists, is hid in the remote depths of antiquity, and is consequently extremely difficult to be ascertained." Zwingli, the Swiss reformer, contemporary with Luther, says: "The institution of Anabaptism is no novelty, but for thirteen hundred years has caused great disturbance in the church." If it had existed 1,300 years before Zwingli, it must have gone back to within two hundred years of Christ, to say the least.

Dr. Dermont, chaplain to the King of Holland, and Dr. Ypeij, theological professor at Groningen, received, a few years since, a royal commission to prepare a history of the Reformed Dutch Church. That history contains the following manly, generous, and truthful testimony touching the Dutch Baptists: "We have now seen that the Baptists, who were formerly called Anabaptists, were the original Waldenses, and have long in the history of the church received the honor of that origin. On this account the Baptists may be "considered the only Christian community which has stood since the apostles, and as a Christian society, which has preserved pure the doctrines of the Gospel through all ages."

This is earnest and reliable testimony from those who are not Baptists, and who have no personal sympathy with the Baptists, but who speak frankly the truths which history has recorded.

The Welsh Baptists claim their origin from the Apostles, and urge in favor of the claim reasons so cogent as have never been disproved. When Austin, the Romish monk, visited Wales about the close of "the sixth century, he found a community of more than two thousand Christians living quietly in the mountains, who discarded the authority of the Romish Church. Austin labored to bring them to what he considered the true faith. They refused all his overtures: Yielding things in general, he reduced his demand to three things in particular, namely, First, that they should observe Easter in due form, as ordered by the church. Second, That they should give Christendom, or baptism, to their children. Third, That they should preach to the English the word of God, as formerly, directed.

This demand upon them proves that they neither observed the Romish ordinance of Easter, nor baptized their children. Nor would they submit to this final demand; whereupon Austin threatened them with war and wretchedness. Not long after, Wales was invaded by the Saxons, and many of these Christians cruelly murdered, as was believed, at the instigation of the exacting and bigoted Austin.

In England, from the twelfth to the seventeenth century, many Baptists suffered cruel persecutions and death, by burning, drowning, beheading, with many inhuman tortures, because they worshipped God according to the dictates of His word and their own consciences, and refused to submit their faith to the dictates of popes and kings.

In 1533, royal edicts were issued against them, and several were burnt in Smithfield. Brandt writes that, " In the year 1538, thirty-one Baptists that fled from England, were put to death at Deft in Holland; the men were beheaded, and the women drowned." Bishop Latimer declares, that Baptists were burned in different parts of the kingdom, and went to death with good integrity," during the time of Edward VI. Under the rule of the Popish Mary, they suffered, perhaps, no more than under that of the Protestant .Elizabeth: for during the reign of the latter, a congregation of Baptists being discovered in London, some were banished, twenty-seven imprisoned, and two burnt at Smithfield. In 1639, Bailey wrote, that "under the shadow of independency, they have lifted up their heads, and increased their numbers above all sects in the land. They have forty-six churches in and about London. They are a people very fond of religious liberty, and very unwilling to be brought under bondage of the judgment of any other."

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